

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 AF-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-08 INR-10
LAB-04 NSAE-00 SIL-01 IO-13 TRSE-00 OMB-01
DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 L-03 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15
USIA-06 AID-05 /101 W
-----004736 271637Z /45 46

R 271320Z MAR 78
FM AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0548
INFO AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI
AMEMBASSY ALGIERS
AMEMBASSY AMMAN
USINT BAGHDAD
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY DOHA
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM
AMEMBASSY MANAMA
AMEMBASSY MUSCAT
AMEMBASSY SANA
AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI
AMEMBASSY TUNIS

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DEPT FOR NEA/RA AND NEA/ARP

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: ELAB, KU
SUBJ: NEW KUWAIT LABOR MINISTER DISCUSSES LABOR MATTERS

REF: (A) KUWAIT 0905 (NOTAL), (B) KUWAIT 1010, (C) KUWAIT 1237,

1. KUWAIT'S NEW MINISTER FOR SOCIAL AFFAIRS AND LABOR,
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ABDULAZIZ MAHMOUD BU-SHAHRI (USUALLY REFERRED TO AS MAHMOUD),
MADE FOLLOWING COMMENTS ON LABOR MATTERS DURING CALL BY AMBASSADOR
MARCH 21.

2. ILO: MAHMOUD GREATLY REGRETTED U.S. WITHDRAWAL DECISION,
FEELING THAT MOVE HAD NEGATIVE CONSEQUENCES WELL BEYOND
FINANCIAL IMPACT ON ILO. HE CALLED U.S. "ONE OF THE MOST

EFFECTIVE MEMBERS OF THE ILO...PROVIDING A GREAT MORAL CONTRIBUTION IN MOVING THE ILO IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION". HE EXPRESSED HOPE U.S. WILL CONTINUE TO PARTICIPATE IN ILO ACTIVITIES WHERE POSSIBLE. KUWAIT WILL COORDINATE ON GULF AND WIDER ARAB LEVEL TO ARRIVE AT CONSENSUS POSITIONS PRIOR TO JUNE ILO MEETING, MINISTER SAID.

3. RECENT INTERNATIONAL CONFEDERATION OF ARAB TRADE UNIONS (ICATU) MEETING IN KUWAIT: MAHMOUD CALLED MEETING "REALLY EXCEPTIONAL" IN ITS DISPLAY OF DISUNITY, BUT NOTED THAT DECISIONS TAKEN AT THIS EXTRAORDINARY MEETING WERE "ONLY TEMPORARY UNTIL THE NEXT GENERAL MEETING". MINISTER CALLED BLAST AT SADAT BY KUWAITI LABOR LEADER FARRAJ, AT OPENING SESSIONS OF ICATU MEETING, UNFORTUNATE. HE DID NOT INDICATE THAT GOK PLANNED TAKE ANY ACTION AGAINST FARRAJ, AND CLAIMED THAT GOK DOES NOT INTERFERE IN LABOR UNION MATTERS PROVIDED THEY ARE NOT PREJUDICIAL TO THE INTERESTS OF KUWAIT.

4. POSITION OF EXPATRIATE WORKERS IN KUWAIT: MINISTER CALLED GOVERNMENT LABOR POLICY "NON-DISCRIMINATORY" BUT THEN PROCEEDED TO EXPLAIN THAT FIRST PRIORITY IN EMPLOYMENT GOES TO KUWAITI WORKERS, SECOND TO THOSE FROM OTHER ARAB COUNTRIES, AND LAST TO OTHER EXPATRIATES. GOK POLICY IS TO PROMOTE WORKER WELFARE, SINCE THIS LEADS TO HIGHER PRODUCTIVITY. MAHMOUD COMMENTED THAT EXISTENCE OF LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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COMPOUNDS TO HOUSE FOREIGN WORKERS, THOUGH NOT WIDESPREAD, WAS CLEARLY SOURCE OF CONCERN TO GOK, SINCE THEY ARE AREAS OF LABOR CONCENTRATION "WHERE FOREIGN STRUGGLES MAY BE TRANSPLANTED TO KUWAIT, CAUSING PROBLEMS".

5. COMMENT: MAHMOUD HAS THE UNWELCOME TASK OF DEALING WITH THE MUZZLED, BUT STILL LEFTIST, LABOR UNIONS IN KUWAIT, OF HANDLING PROBLEMS ARISING FROM KUWAIT'S HEAVY DEPENDENCE ON EXPATRIATE LABOR (75 PERCENT OF THE LABOR FORCE) AND OF COPING WITH MESSY, INTER-ARAB LABOR SQUABBLES. CONVERSATION INDICATED MINISTER WELL-UP ON LABOR MATTERS, WHICH NOT SURPRISING, GIVEN OVER 20 YEARS HE SPENT WORKING HIS WAY UP IN MINISTRY TO PRESENT POSITION. HIS COMMENTS ABOUT THE U.S. WITHDRAWAL FROM THE ILO ARE UNDOUBTEDLY QUITE SINCERE, AND HE AND HIS MINISTRY WILL APPRECIATE WHATEVER INFORMATION WE CAN PROVIDE HIM ON OUR EVOLVING STANCE REGARDING THE ILO.

MASETRONE

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Message Attributes

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Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
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Disposition History: n/a
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Disposition Remarks:
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